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NEWS RELEASE

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Improved Tracking and Processing Accompany Increase in BLM Mining Claim Fees

An increase in fees charged by the Bureau of Land Management for locating and maintaining mining claims will go into effect today, as required under a 1994 law. Holders of mining claims will pay \$30 for the location fee for newly located claims or sites, an increase of \$5. The annual maintenance fee will increase from \$100 to \$125 per mining claim or site.

The 1994 law requires mining claim fees to be adjusted for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is published by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. The increase affects location and maintenance fees for mining claims located on Federal lands subject to the 1872 Mining Law.

The BLM first announced the fee increase on July 1, 2004. However, in an Interior Department appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2005, Congress rolled back fees to previous levels until the Department:

- established a nationwide tracking system to determine and address the length of time from submission of a plan of operations to mine on public lands to final approval of the plan; and
- submitted a report to Congress providing detailed information on the length of time it takes the Department to approve proposed mining plans of operation and recommending steps to reduce current delays.

In response to this congressional direction, the BLM added a component to its land records system that will track the length of time it takes to approve a mining plan of operations, to complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, and to adjudicate bonds and appeals.

The report detailing causes for delays and making recommendations for reducing the length of delays was submitted to Congress on June 30, 2005.

Having completed the two required tasks, the BLM is now restoring the fee increase. The Bureau published a notice of its action in today's *Federal Register*, which can be accessed on the Internet at www.archives.gov/federal_register.

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The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land – 261 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on the public lands.

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